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Letter dated 27 July 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 24 July 1998, addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Aytuğ Plumer, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tuluy TANÇ
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

ANNEX

Letter dated 24 July 1998 from Mr. Aytuğ Plümer addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 9 July 1998 addressed to you by the Greek Cypriot representative at the United Nations (A/52/981-S/1998/631), which contains allegations regarding cultural property in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Previous allegations regarding the so-called "destruction of the religious and cultural identity" of Northern Cyprus have been amply dealt with in our previous communications addressed to you, most recently in my letter dated 15 June 1998 (A/52/956-S/1998/527, annex). Suffice it to say that these Greek Cypriot charges are nothing more than a propaganda ploy which is based on fabrication and misinformation. By pursuing this policy the Greek Cypriots aim to obscure the fact that it has been the Greek Cypriot side that has systematically tried to eradicate the Turkish-Muslim heritage of Cyprus, in particular during the ethnic cleansing campaign directed against the Turkish Cypriot people between 1963 and 1974. A list of 103 mosques and Islamic holy sites destroyed or damaged during this period has been circulated in the appendix to document A/52/366-S/1997/724 of 18 September 1997.

Despite the Greek Cypriot representative's rhetoric to the effect that the policy of the Greek Cypriot administration is "to protect and maintain all cultural, historic and religious monuments in Cyprus", the Greek Cypriot side continues, on the one hand, to show utter contempt for what is left of the Turkish-Islamic heritage in South Cyprus where Ottoman Turkish shrines are under threat of disintegration due to total neglect and, on the other, systematically blocks any financial or technical assistance to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus from international organizations for conservation purposes. Consequently, unlike the Greek Cypriots, who are assisted by generous donations from international organizations and various funds, the Department of Antiquities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the competent authority charged with protecting and preserving cultural sites in the Republic, has to realize its objectives with limited resources.

The policy of the Government of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is to protect the cultural heritage of Northern Cyprus, irrespective of its religious and ethnic origins. Our incessant efforts in this direction have received praise from foreign observers who have visited the island on different occasions. In view of the foregoing, it is clear that the allegations of the Greek Cypriot side on the subject of cultural heritage have no basis and are utterly unjustified. In spite of the reality that the Turkish Cypriots are sovereign equals and co-owners of Cyprus and that the island has a rich Turkish-Islamic heritage owing to centuries-long Turkish rule, with these allegations the Greek Cypriot side attempts to portray Cyprus as an Hellenic island with an exclusively Orthodox Christian background. Such efforts on the part of the Greek Cypriot side demonstrate a mindset which is far removed from engaging in a dialogue on the basis of the existence of two sovereign States with a view to arriving at a partnership settlement.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Aytuğ PLUMER
Representative of the Turkish
Republic of Northern Cyprus